



WHAT IS QUALITY CHILD CARE?

Quality child care supports families.

- ⇒ It enables parents to work while knowing that their children are safe and nurtured.
- ⇒ Quality child care exists when parents and providers are aware of children's needs and how to fulfill them.
- ⇒ Concerned and knowledgeable care givers provide an environment where children can experience encouragement of acceptable behavior, stimulation from adults and materials and opportunities to learn and practice new skills.
- ⇒ Quality child care provides a sound basis for future learning and living.

Demand quality child care. It's your child's right.



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MONTANA CHILD CARE



Quality Child Care
A Reflection of Your Concern



PARENT'S CHECKLIST:

- ☐ Have I made my expectations clear to the child care provider?
- ☐ Do I understand the child care provider's expectations?

HAVE WE DISCUSSED:

- ☐ How an illness of my child should be handled?
- ☐ How discipline should be handled?
- ☐ What I am responsible for bringing?
- ☐ What my child's day will be like in day care?
- ☐ Does the provider know who to reach in an emergency?
- ☐ Have provisions been made for care of the child if my child care provider is taken ill or has an emergency?
- ☐ Have we agreed on the date due and amounts of payments of fees?
- ☐ Have we agreed on advance notice if the child will be absent or late?

CHILD CARE...CHOOSE IT CAREFULLY

As parents, you no doubt know where your children are, but do you know how your children are?

The home-away-from-home has become a necessity as two-parent & single parent households join the work force either because they are raising children alone or because they need (or want) to supplement the family income. In 2005, 25% of licensed day care centers caring for preschoolers charged \$23/day or more; 25% of day care homes charged \$20/day or more. Prices are higher for infants and toddlers: 24% of licensed day care centers charged \$27/day for infant care and 25% of day care homes charged \$22/day.

If you are a child care customer, here are guidelines to make sure your children are receiving the best possible care--even if you are not there.

TYPES OF FACILITIES

There are three types of child care available: family day care homes, group day care homes, and day care centers.

Family day care homes offer a homelike atmosphere and flexible schedules for irregular working hours.

Homes can care for three children under age two, with a maximum of six children at any one time. A quality day care home offers child appropriate activities, limited TV and individualized care.

Group day care homes are settings where two adults provide care for a maximum of twelve children, with a limit of six under age two. This care is usually provided in a residence and shares many of the same qualities as a family day care home.

Day care centers care for thirteen or more children. Montana regulation requires a staff/child ratio of one adult to every four babies, one adult to eight children ages 2-4, one adult to ten children ages 5-6, and one adult to every fourteen children ages 7-10.

Family and group day care homes are registered while day care centers are licensed by the state.

According to recent research, training of child care providers is the variable with the greatest effect on the quality of child care.

Before visiting any facility, telephone several. Ask questions about numbers of children, hours, cost, and provider training taken by the providers. If you're satisfied, arrange a visit.

AVOID PROBLEMS

After you have selected a day care for your child, visit the facility with your child. Tell your child when you will pick him or her up each day. Talk with the provider about your child's needs and preferences. Frequently ask about



your child's progress. Let the staff know that you are interested in their experiences with your child.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK!

STAFF MEMBERS

Do they talk easily with the children?
Do they listen and respond to the children?
Do they encourage creativity and imagination?
What's the experience and background of the staff?
Do they respect each child's individuality?
What kind of discipline is practiced?

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Is the place safe? For example, are electric sockets covered?
Is there enough room for each child?
Is the home registered?
Is the equipment, inside and outside, sturdy and easy to use?
Are meals well-balanced and nutritious?
Is there a quiet and comfortable place for naps?
Is there a first-aid kit? How about emergency care?

Is the bathroom clean? Can the child use the facilities him or herself?

Are heaters ventilated and screened? Are windows locked or securely screened or barred? Are there handrails on the stairs? Is there a yard?

Are there provisions for an ill child?
Does each child have a space for his own things?

EMOTIONAL CLIMATE

Do the children seem happy and relaxed?
Do they show they like and trust the adults?
Does the staff communicate easily with each child?
Is individual achievement encouraged?
Do you feel comfortable with the staff and the place?

LEARNING ATMOSPHERE

Do the activities seem well-planned?
Are there opportunities for each child?
Are the children's questions answered easily?
Are learning opportunities suitable to different ages?
Are special events and tours part of the program?
Are the children's projects displayed and available to take home?

SOCIAL INTERACTION

Do you like how the children behave and relate to each other?
Are conflicts handled sensitively?
Will your child fit in with the other children?
Are the language and culture of each child respected?
What role does the parent play? Are you expected to take part in the program and in what ways?